

help you show that you are hearing and understanding another person and are interested in what he or she has to say.

Responding productively to emotional statements. A communication skill called *active listening* is especially useful in emotional situations because it enables you to demonstrate that you understand what the other person is saying and how he or she is feeling about it. Active listening means restating, in your own words, what the other person has said. It's a check on whether your understanding is correct. This demonstrates that you are listening and that you are interested and concerned. Active listening responses have two components:

- Naming the feeling that the other person is conveying
- Stating the reason for the feeling

Here are some examples of active listening statements:

- "Sounds like you're upset about what happened at school."
- "You're annoyed by my lateness, aren't you?"
- "You sound really confused about how to solve this problem."
- "It makes you angry when you find errors on my homework."
- "Sounds like you're really worried about Wendy."
- "I get the feeling you're awfully busy right now."

Active listening is not the same as agreement. It is a way of demonstrating that you intend to hear and understand another's point of view.

The ability to get along well with people is a set of learned skills. No one is born knowing how to build others' self-esteem, show empathy, encourage cooperation, communicate assertively,

ask productive questions, or respond productively to emotional statements. But with some practice these skills can be learned and developed. By taking the time to develop these skills, you will be able to build better relationships at home and at work.



WHERE CAN I GO FOR MORE INFORMATION?

Covey, Sean. *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens: The Ultimate Teenage Success Guide*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998.

McGraw, Jay, and McGraw, Phillip. *Life Strategies for Teens*. New York: Fireside, 2000.

SEE THESE HANDOUTS ON RELATED TOPICS

Assertiveness Skills (for Teens)
Building Positive Teen Relationships
Dealing with Peer Pressure (for Teens)
Expressing Feelings Responsibly (for Teens)
Life Skills (for Teens)
Listening Skills (for Teens)
Personal Negotiation Skills (for Teens)
Understanding Body Language (for Teens)
Workplace Skills (for Teens)



Building People Skills (for Teens)



WHAT ARE PEOPLE SKILLS?

How would you like to get along even better with others in your family, in relationships with friends, and at school? Getting along well with people sounds kind of general and is difficult to do much about, so let's break it down into some manageable and specific skills. By building the following skills, you will get along well with others:

- Building others' self-esteem.
- Showing empathy for others.
- Encouraging people to cooperate with each other.
- Communicating assertively.
- Asking productive questions and demonstrating listening skills.
- Responding productively to emotional statements.



People skills (which are also known as *emotional intelligence*) can be thought of as six specific skills. Let's take a brief look at each one.

Building others' self-esteem. When you are in a situation in which you are made to feel good about yourself, you feel good. You can do the same with others by doing the following kinds of things:

- Make eye contact with others.
- Call others by their names.
- Ask others their opinions.
- Compliment others' work.
- Tell people how much you appreciate them.
- Write notes of thanks when someone does something worthwhile.
- Make people feel welcome when they come to your home or workplace.

Empathy means recognizing emotions in others. It is the capacity to put yourself in another person's shoes and understand how they view their reality and how they feel about things.

- Pay attention to what is going on in people's lives. Acknowledge milestones and express concern about difficult life situations such as illness, deaths, and accidents.
- Introduce your family members to acquaintances when you meet them out in public.
- Encourage people you care about to explore their talents and interests.
- Share your friends' excitement when they accomplish something.
- Honor people's needs and wants.

- Take responsibility for your choices and actions, and expect others to do the same.
- Take responsibility for the quality of your communications.

Showing empathy for others. *Empathy* means recognizing emotions in others. It is the capacity to put yourself in another person's shoes and understand how he or she views reality and how he or she feels about things.

Being aware of our emotions and how they affect our actions is a very important ability in today's world, both at school and at work. People who are cut off from their emotions are unable to connect with people. It's as if they were emotionally tone deaf. No one wants to be around such people, because they have no idea how they affect others. You have probably met a few people who fit this description.

Encouraging people to cooperate with each other. When you are working or engaging in activities with others in a group, there are some specific things you can do to help create an environment where you will all work together well:

- Don't play favorites. Treat everyone the same. Otherwise, some people will not trust you.

People who are cut off from their emotions are unable to connect with people. It's like they are emotionally tone deaf.

- Don't talk about people behind their backs.
- Ask for others' ideas. Participation increases commitment.
- Follow up on suggestions, requests, and comments, even if you are unable to carry out a request.

- Check for understanding when you make a statement or announcement. Don't assume everyone is with you.
- Make sure people have clear instructions for tasks to be completed. Ask people to describe what they plan to do.
- Let people know you appreciate it when they are cooperative. Don't take it for granted.

Communicating assertively. Assertive communication is a constructive way of expressing feelings and opinions. People are not born assertive; their behavior is a combination of learned skills. Assertive behavior enables you to:

- Act in your own best interests
- Stand up for yourself without becoming anxious
- Express your honest feelings
- Assert your personal rights without denying the rights of others

Assertive behavior is different from passive or aggressive behavior in that it is:

- Self-expressive
- Honest
- Direct
- Self-enhancing
- Constructive, not destructive

Active listening responses have two components:

- Naming the feeling that the other person is conveying
- Stating the reason for the feeling

Assertive behavior includes both *what* you say and *how* you say it.

Asking productive questions and demonstrating listening skills. Listening skills